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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, Spring is finally here!! The weather has been terrific; and the snow in my yard is all gone! Spring cleaning has started in my neighborhood; and it's an enjoyable sight. Pretty soon I'll be out getting the gardens and lawn prepared for their annual rites of Spring. It's a great time of year!

This year our major project will be to work on the house. We plan to enlarge (or replace) the kitchen, and do some other renovations. I've been putting it off for too long, but it's time. In other words, my wife says it had better happen, or else!

Computing and web news has been sparse all month, surprisingly. Whether it's due to the economy or not, who knows. And I haven't seen anything related to our favorite Atari systems for awhile, either. Maybe it's all due to the winter taking its toll, but rejuvenation will occur soon. In the meantime, I'll daydream of going barefoot in the grass, flowers blooming, the barbecue cooking, and longer days.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and things are just as they were last week... different.

There are lots of things going on these days. Some of them we all know about, some of them some of us know about, and some of them none of us know about. I was a bit dismayed to hear that someone has been messing (actually, SEVERAL someones doing several kinds of messing) around with Al Jazeera's website.

I mean c'mon people. Think back to the days before everybody and their brother could get onto the internet. When it was just those of us who

knew a bit about computers and a bit about things like online services, modems, and user accounts. The news of the coming connectivity instilled in us a feeling that the world would soon be smaller and we'd all find it easier to understand one another and resolve things.

And for a while, that's how it was. Sort of a geek utopia. I can remember chatting with several people that I'd never have had the opportunity to talk with otherwise and thinking, "it won't be long now until we all get to express our ideas and get to hear the other guy's ideas and realize that we all just want to be ourselves".

Yeah, well, what can I say? I was young and foolish. <grin>

I don't mean to take what's going on lightly. Just the opposite, in fact. But I probably have a different perspective than you, than my boss, than my neighbor, etc.

It won't happen this time around, or the next, but eventually we WILL come to understand one another and perhaps... just perhaps... respect one another every so-often.

Okay, enough of that. Let's talk about something with "Atari" in the title.

Thanks to a little bit of traffic on the UseNet last week, there are now 66 members of the TEAM ATARI SETI@home group. We've contributed almost 135 years of CPU time to searching more than 100,000 work units containing radio signals from outer space, looking for a signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence... kinda like Jody Foster in CONTACT without the big budget. It's really a cool project, and worth looking into. Check it out at http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu
Info about TEAM ATARI can be found at:
http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/stats/team/team_21046.html

Well, let's get to the news and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Jared Addington asks for help diagnosing his sick Falcon:

"Recently my Falcon received an unexpected electrical jolt. Now when the power is turned on, it comes up with a white screen just like it would normally but nothing else ever happens. No Atari logo or RAM check ever occurs. The power supply, & HD seem OK. Any ideas at all would be appreciated."

Barrie at Keychange tells Jared:

"You need to find someone with a Falcon test cartridge."

Jared tells Barrie:

"I've heard of those, but I don't know how they work...That will work even though the computer does nothing?"

Mark Bedingfield adds:

"I had a Falcon that did this. It turned out to be oxidisation on the ROM chip. Best cleaned with an eraser."

Dennis Bishop asks about making things available on the web:

"I would like to put the SIAR's newsletter online for downloading, but have no idea of how to do it, anyone give me some help?"

Greg Goodwin tells Dennis:

"What format is the newsletter in? If it is (mostly) text, HTML would be the recommended method. If it is not too long, you can scan the pages as GIFs (use about 75 DPI -- that's all the screen shows anyhow) and place in a very simple web page (Just make sure that you warn people that this page is BIG!). If it is more complicated, I'd recommend PDF format if you don't want to learn more advanced HTML."

Dennis tells Greg:

"I write the newsletter using Word Perf.9.0 and it includes images and stuff, I save it two ways, word perf. and also pdf. both as a multi-page single file.

I see web sites where you click on a link to download a pdf file, just not sure who to set it up, I mostly use netscape composer for my web page writings.

www.starlords.org is the site where I want to set up the DL of newsletter on."

Stephen Moss jumps in and tells Dennis:

"A normal link should do it eg...

 Link Text goes here

However integrated systems with a PDF viewer installed (eg windoze) might run the viewer thus displaying the page instead of just downloading it as a file for later viewing.

I'm not sure how you would arrange things so that it only ever downloads the file unseen if that is the only method of downloading you wanted but the PDF viewer should have a save option if someone want to keep a permanent copy.

If that does not work just visit the site you you know has a similar link, click on your browsers "view Source" button and scan the source code for the link then copy it changing the URL, directories and filename as appropriate (creating a new blank page and then copying and pasting their link to it and viewing that pages source code may be easier than having to scan through someone elses entire page of code), just hope they did not use Java script!"

Guy Harrison adds:

"Also worth mentioning the following...

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IE       : right-click on url/link "Save Target As".
NS       : right-click on url/link "Save Link As"
Opera    : right-click on url/link "Save target as"
Dillo    : right-click on url/link "Save Link As"
Lynx     : select url/link, press "d"
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...all override default browser behaviour and download the file under the link verbatim."

Dennis tells Guy:

"I had forgotten about that viewer operation, so what I'll do is put it up as a ZIP file for DL'ing and offline reading, they'll just need to unzip it first."

Kersey Graves asks about installing a hard drive:

"I got a Megafile 30 at the swap meet with a cable. It powers up OK, the green and yellow lights come on, then after a while the yellow goes out and the green remains. I can heard the disk inside rotating with a steady whirr.

I have various 1040 STs and one Mega 2 ST. (Musician, you can tell No matter to which ST I hook up this !@#$$ hard drive, the computers just don't take notice of it. I can install a C drive icon on the Desktop, but whenever I double click the icon, I get the following error message:

"The drive you specified does not exist. Check the drive's identifier or change the drive identifier in the DISK INFORMATION dialog."

What the heck does this mean? There is no "disk information dialog" anywhere that I can see. If I select the C drive icon and go to "File / Show Info", I get this same error message again. How was this supposed to work?"

Edward Baiz tells Kersey:

"You need to install a Hard Disk driver for the ST. The best one is HDDriver. A downloadable demo of it can be found at: http://www.seimet.de/index_english.html "

Well folks, I'm done here for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo Pins Hopes On GBA SP!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Nintendo Hooks Overseas Hopes on New Game Boy

Japanese video game maker Nintendo said on Tuesday it had invested heavily in a redesigned version of its top-selling Game Boy Advance to boost sales in the vital but struggling European and American markets.

In Europe, Nintendo has shipped 400,000 units of Game Boy Advance SP, an upgrade of the Game Boy Advance (GBA), ahead of its March 28 launch. The new device had a March 23 U.S. debut.

The company will spend 30 million euros in Europe alone to market the product, which features a rechargeable battery, a brightly lit screen and a sleeker metallic-look finish to appeal to an older consumer base.

"We've seen a significant number of pre-orders, probably between thirty and forty percent of the initial shipment figure as of last week," David Gosen, managing director of Nintendo of Europe, told Reuters on Tuesday.

Nintendo has a lot riding on the pocket-sized device, which carries a suggested retail price of $138.20 in Europe and $99 in the U.S.

Last month, the company forecast sales of 20 million Game Boy Advance machines for the business year starting on April 1, an increase of one third from the current business year.

Hitting the target is crucial as sales of its flagship GameCube console continue to disappoint retailers. Earlier this month, UK retailer Dixons slashed the unit's price by $47.35 in an effort to shift inventory amid slow demand.

Various market estimates suggest GameCube is losing ground in the U.S. and Europe to Sony's PlayStation 2 and Microsoft's Xbox, making a strong showing from GBA SP all the more important.

The weak performance of GameCube has prompted concerns among investors. The stock, which closed down 3.7 on Tuesday in Tokyo at 9,720 yen ($81.27), is down nearly 17 percent since the start of the year.

To rekindle European interest in GameCube, Nintendo is including a sales voucher with each GBA SP, entitling buyers to a 50-euro discount on GameCube.

"It's one of the ways we see taking our Nintendo fan base across different platforms," Gosen said.

During the past weekend, major U.S. electronics retailers heavily promoted the new GBA SP, with many dangling a free game or a bundle package that included accessories like a carrying case to stoke demand.

First-day U.S. sales figures were not immediately available but Nintendo claimed to have done "exceedingly well" for the day. Unofficial tallies out of Japan suggest the unit is selling well there since its Feb. 14 debut.

One U.S. retailer, CompUSA, offered the device for $69 as part of an anniversary promotion for its stores. For the most part, retailers honored the $99 price, an amount that some have questioned given that GameCube

sells for $150 in the U.S.

"The price point at $99 is a little high, especially when you compare it to where the (major consoles) are," THQ Inc. Chief Executive Brian Farrell said last month. THQ is a major Game Boy publisher.

Pricing concerns aside, industry observers and reviewers note that Game Boy Advance SP has generated the all-important buzz factor, particularly among the older demographic of twenty-somethings that Nintendo is trying to cash in on.

"From what I've come across, it's been pretty well anticipated by retailers and publishers. Nintendo is reflecting that in its guidance," said a London-based gaming analyst.

Others are already talking about the "Game Boy impact" - a carry-over effect that could bring consumers back to Nintendo, the most established brand in video games, which has lost some of its luster of late.

"I think SP will be a positive catalyst," the analyst said.

Ever since its introduction in 1989, the Game Boy has defeated all comers, even if some rival products were arguably more powerful, such as Sega's Game Gear.

Later this year, Nintendo will compete head-on with N-Gage, a mobile phone and game gadget from Finnish heavyweight Nokia, which has so far failed to impress reviewers.

Nokia still poses a legitimate threat, considering its marketing and distribution prowess and its status as a brand of choice for older consumers.

The key for GBA SP, and Nintendo as a whole, is whether it can attract buyers above the age of 16, a group that is proving elusive for the company at the moment. "Undoubtedly, this is the crucial test for SP," the analyst said.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Adam Osborne, Portable Computer Pioneer, Dead at 64

Adam Osborne, whose successes and failures pioneering the first portable computer became one of Silicon Valley's great cautionary tales, is dead at 64 after a long illness.

Osborne, a British immigrant and long-time resident of Berkeley, California, died in his sleep in Kodiakanal, a village in southern India last Tuesday, his sister, Katya Douglas, told Reuters on Monday.

His death ended a decade-long battle with an organic brain disorder that caused him to suffer an endless series of mini-strokes.

The popularity of the 23-pound luggable computer he introduced in 1981 made his start-up, Osborne Computer Corp., the fastest-growing company up to that time, thanks in part to his willingness to cut the cost of computers nearly in half compared with rivals such as first-to-market Apple Computer.

But the rigors of "hypergrowth" -- a term coined to describe his company's rise -- ended in an even quicker plunge into bankruptcy two years later, making Osborne's legacy a textbook study of the perils of undisciplined growth.

A later generation of dot-com entrepreneurs would come to repeat his mistakes on an even more spectacular scale.

Friends and former colleagues said they remembered Osborne as a man brimming with ideas, an engineer turned early computer publisher, then pioneering computer executive, for whom concepts ruled and business was secondary.

"My appreciation of him was that he was too much of an entrepreneur and not enough of a jack-of-all-trades," recalled Lee Felsenstein, another co-founder of Osborne Computer.

"He had the perfect personality to become a dot-com billionaire," but arrived too early, said John C. Dvorak, a columnist for PC Magazine. Dvorak helped Osborne write the first Silicon Valley CEO confessional following Osborne Computer's collapse, inspiring a mini-genre since then.

Born in Thailand to British expatriate parents, Osborne spent his childhood in southern India, the son of an author of comparative theology who helped popularize Eastern religion to the West.

After attending public school and university in England, he married and moved to the United States to pursue a career in chemical engineering with Shell Oil. He later became a U.S. citizen. Osborne gambled on a new career in technical writing and publishing during the formative years of the PC industry.

Seeing an opportunity to challenge Apple Computer after its initial success in 1977, Osborne turned to developing the first commercially viable portable computer. He received backing from renowned Silicon Valley venture capitalist Jack Melchor.

In 1981, the company's first year, Osborne sold $5.8 million worth of the Osborne-1 computer. By the end of 1982, he had sold $68.8 million, or as many as 10,000 units a month.

Then his classic business misstep occurred. Osborne boasted in early 1983 of an improved second generation of his product -- months before it was ready to ship. Sales of older models of his portable sewing-machine-sized computers plummeted.

The inventory build-up that resulted led Osborne Computer to collapse in September 1983.

"His enthusiasm for the next big thing meant Adam couldn't keep a secret," recalled Felsenstein, who lives in Palo Alto, California, where he

continues to work as a computer hardware designer and also working on a low-cost wireless computer system for villagers in Laos.

Compaq Computer Corp., now a part of Hewlett-Packard Co. picked up where Osborne left off when Compaq introduced its first product - a portable computer - in 1983.

Undaunted by his company's failure, Osborne published a memoir of his experience in 1984 entitled "Hypergrowth." He then jumped into a new venture he called Paperback Software - based on the idea that software could be sold like mass-market paperbacks.

That venture ran aground after Paperback was sued by rival Lotus Development Corp. in a high-profile case that alleged Paperback's spreadsheet program too closely resembled Lotus' own 1-2-3 program. Osborne and Paperback parted ways in 1990.

Osborne's health began to decline in 1992, leading him to move to India to live out the rest of his life with his sister, Katya.

He was buried on Tuesday in a local cemetery near his sister's home, in Kodiakanal, an isolated village whose closest major city is Chanai.

Osborne married and divorced twice. Survivors include his first wife, Cynthia Geddes, and their three children, Marc, Paul and Alexandra Osborne, and his second wife, Barbara Burdick.

Linux Gains Ground In Retailing

Linux is gaining market share in the retail industry. Use of the open-source operating system to run point-of-sale terminals in North America increased 185% last year, IHL Consulting Group said in a study released Wednesday.

Linux is gaining traction particularly within restaurants and "category killers," megastores such as Home Depot and Toys "R" Us that are thought to drive small, local stores out of business, says IHL, an independent business-consulting firm for IT companies focusing on the retail industry.

Nevertheless, with only 4% of the point-of-sale market, Linux has quite a way to go before it becomes a serious challenger to Microsoft's Windows and IBM's 4690, which last year had 69% and 17% of total shipments, respectively.

While many retailers are looking at Linux as an upgrade path for aging DOS installations, few have made a chainwide decision, the study finds. Because of the economic slowdown, the point-of-sale market in general has slowed, with retailers more likely to spend limited IT funds on scanners and self-checkout systems. Overall, the point-of-sale market in 2002 dropped 2% from the previous year.

California Moves Closer to Taxing Internet Sales

California, the nation's most populous state, this week took a step closer

to collecting tax on sales of consumer goods over the Internet - a move rejected by its governor in better budgetary times.

A tax committee of California's Senate on Wednesday approved two bills that would clear the way for the state to collect sales tax on goods sold by out-of-state vendors to its residents via the Web, a move that could help it recoup an estimated $1.75 billion in lost annual tax revenue.

When California's home-grown Internet sector was thriving, California Gov. Gray Davis was an opponent of online sales taxes, saying they could hamper the growth of then-booming dot-com companies.

But such concerns have been eclipsed by a recent study finding that California appears to losing more tax revenues to online sales than any other state.

As the state looks to plug a $35 billion budget gap over the next 15 months, lawmakers and Davis are taking a second look at Internet sales taxes.

The first Internet tax bill would require California to join a group of 35 states and the District of Columbia, working to help states tax remote sellers, including those that operate online and via mail-order.

Members of that group known as the Streamlined Sales Tax Project were key players in a February deal in which eight major online retailers agreed to begin collecting taxes on behalf of about three dozen states. As part of that deal, the vendors were granted amnesty for any prior uncollected taxes.

California did not participate in that settlement and has remained on the sidelines on the issue.

"This isn't about 'taxing the Internet,' it's about equity, because people should be taxed on what they buy, not how they buy it," bill sponsor Sen. Debra Bowen, a Democrat, said in a statement.

Bowen said the current tax system gives every out-of-state businesses an instant 7.25 to 8.5 percent price advantage over California-based retailers, who collect that sales tax at the point of sale depending on where it is made.

A second pending tax bill would require retailers with "bricks and mortar" locations in California to collect state sales tax on Internet transactions with California customers through their online subsidiaries and partners.

California residents are currently required to report and pay such sales taxes, although few do.

Davis vetoed a similar bill in 2000 - at a time when Internet companies were still seen as an high-powered engine for economic growth.

Bowen's bill is scheduled to be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee in April. A committee hearing for the "bricks and mortar" bill has not yet been set.

Bowen also penned a separate anti-spam bill approved by committee on Monday.

That bill would outlaw unsolicited commercial e-mail, commonly known as

"spam," and give people the right to sue spammers for $500 per violation. The bill also would give judges the right to triple fines in cases where the sender willfully and knowingly violated California's spam ban.

That bill also is slated to be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee in April.

Time to Charge for Online Magazines

Time Inc., owned by AOL Time Warner said on Thursday it would charge for the online editions of 14 of its magazines starting with People and Entertainment Weekly on Monday.

People and Entertainment Weekly's Internet editions will be out of bounds to readers except to America Online members, subscribers to the specific magazines, or people who buy the newsstand edition.

In the following weeks, magazines such as Teen People, Real Simple and In Style will follow the same route.

The move is part of an announcement planned for Monday by Internet service provider AOL for new broadband services.

AOL is expected to offer content from different divisions of AOL Time Warner such as video clips of movies from Warner Brothers to its broadband members.

It currently has 35 million members, 2.7 million of which access the Internet via high speed connections.

Court Ruling Could Help Fight Spam

In a legal action that may help combat spam, a federal appeals court has ruled that a law restricting junk faxes is constitutional. Anti-spam experts hailed the decision, noting that it creates a legal precedent that could help create similar legislation banning junk e-mail.

The ruling concerns a federal law known as the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA). Enacted in 1991, it expressly prohibits using "any telephone facsimile machine, computer or other device to send an unsolicited advertisement to a telephone facsimile machine."

In March of 2002, the United States District Court in Eastern Missouri ruled that the TCPA's provision against unsolicited faxes was unconstitutional. This ruling stemmed from a lawsuit brought by the state against two companies that sent unsolicited fax advertisements. The companies argued that this action was protected by a Supreme Court ruling that extended free speech protection to commercial messages.

In overturning the 2002 ruling, the Eighth Circuit panel found that restricting unsolicited fax advertisements is reasonable. Banning unsolicited fax advertising does not violate the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech, the appeals panel said.

Despite the hope the ruling offers to groups advocating anti-spam legislation, some analysts noted that the battle against junk e-mail remains tough.

"We do expect federal laws to move forward," said Ari Schwartz, associate director of the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT). He added that spam interests legislators "because there's such an outcry from people."

But "you can't ban all commercial e-mail outright," Schwartz told NewsFactor. "You have to come up with a way that's constitutional." Although this can be done, there are numerous concerns, he said - for example, "How do you define 'unsolicited'?"

Others have raised doubts about the enforceability of such legislation. "What kind of resources is the government really willing to marshal to combat spam?" asked Yankee Group analyst J.P. Gownder. "It's internationalized and it's potentially completely decentralized," he told NewsFactor.

"I think the regulatory approach is probably not the right approach," Gownder concluded.

The Eighth Circuit appeals panel ruled that the TCPA reasonably acts to prohibit the costs to recipients of so-called junk faxes. The TCPA says that unsolicited faxes unfairly shift the economic burden onto recipients by forcing them to pay for the paper and ink such messages require.

Many groups fighting spam argue that junk e-mail puts a similar burden on recipients. The hours that employees spend handling such e-mail place an economic burden on corporations, they contend. Additionally, many firms are forced to invest in anti-spam software.

Gownder said that "probably 40 to 50 percent of all e-mail now is spam," adding that spam creates heightened security risks for companies.

As public pressure for federal anti-spam laws mounts, anti-spam groups may use the Eighth Court's ruling to push for new legislation. There are currently no federal laws regulating spam, although some states have passed anti-spam legislation.

Spam experts say that the recent Eighth Circuit Court ruling proves that an anti-spam law would prove to be constitutional.

CDT's Schwartz noted that "there seems like there will be many attempts" to pass anti-spam legislation.

"Politicians use this as an issue," Yankee Group's Gownder said. "They know [spam] makes people angry. But, he added, "Why don't we allow the spam-blocking technologies to work on a market level rather than a regulatory level?

"There are maybe ten different technological methods for blocking spam at the moment. They're either going to have to rely on that, or they're going to have to send police officers over to where the server is located," he said.

Adding momentum to the push for federal anti-spam legislation, the Direct Marketing Association announced that it favors federal legislation controlling junk e-mail.

The group’s 4,700-company membership includes many direct mail and telemarketing firms; hence, it is expected to lobby to shape such laws.

The group says it now will "pursue legislation as the latest tactic in the battle against the rising volume of spam inundating consumers’ e-mailboxes."

Antivirus Vendors To Add Spam-Fighting Capabilities

Although the antivirus market is among the most mature in software, there’s still room for improvement, research firm Meta Group says.

Businesses should keep an eye on developments, particularly moves by major vendors in integrating corporate anti-spam defenses with virus killers.

By the end of next year, says Meta Group’s Peter Firstbrook, a senior research analyst with the firm’s security and risk-strategies service, the leading antivirus vendors will offer comprehensive anti-spam software through acquisition or integration.

Longer term, he says, the successful security software makers will incorporate other forms of content management such as URL and mobile-code filtering at the enterprise gateway, and will offer integrated personal firewalls and personal intrusion detection at the client.

"Antivirus defense isn’t achieved solely by installing a software product. It’s attained by partnering with one or more strategic vendors, deploying a suite of defensive tools, actively monitoring threat activity, and continuously adjusting defenses," Firstbrook says.

Businesses that are reluctant to switch from existing antivirus client software, which may be spread across tens of thousands of seats in the case of major companies, should select a vendor dedicated to deploying antivirus software and security in large organizations.

That leaves three security software makers - Network Associates/McAfee, Symantec, and Trend Micro - as the leading contenders for enterprise business. Of those three, Firstbrook tags Trend Micro as the leader, thanks to its dominance in the growing gateway market, its focus on the virus outbreak cycle, and its centralized management tools. But Symantec and McAfee aren’t far behind. Challengers to the big three include Computer Associates and Sophos.

The maturation of the security market means businesses have opportunities to bargain. "Aggressive negotiations [on licensing and service plans] can lower the cost of ownership of antivirus defenses," Firstbrook said.

Companies evaluating antivirus and security suppliers should seek out vendors with ongoing investments in research and development, and a proven track record of innovation.

On Monday, Symantec announced AntiVirus for SMTP Gateways 3.1, an E-mail gateway defense that integrates both anti-spam and antivirus features - the kind of move Firstbrook said to look for.

AntiVirus for SMTP Gateways 3.1 includes multiple methods of defending against spam, ranging from blacklists provided by third parties to a

heuristic anti-spam engine that probes a message’s characteristics and determines the likelihood that it’s spam. Administrators can tweak the anti-spam engine for best results for their users, as well as create and apply more traditional spam defenses, such as whitelists and subject-line filtering.

Microsoft Limits E-Mail to Fight Spam

To cut down on junk e-mail, Microsoft Corp. is capping the number of e-mails that users of its free Hotmail service can send each day.

By limiting to 100 the number of messages that could be sent in a 24-hour period, Microsoft’s MSN division hopes to stop people from using its service to send the unsolicited messages, known as spam.

"MSN is strongly committed to helping stop the widespread problem of spam and this change is one way we are preventing spammers from using Hotmail as a vehicle to send the unwanted e-mails," said Lisa Gurry, MSN lead product manager.

Microsoft said it viewed the limit as a reasonable cap that would affect less than 1 percent of its active subscriber base of 110 million. The company would not disclose its previous cap.

The limit took effect earlier this month. It does not apply MSN 8 subscribers or those who purchase extra storage on Hotmail.

Spam Keeps Al-Jazeera Website Down, English Version Delayed

Waves of spam have kept Al-Jazeera’s website down for a third day, and officials at the maverick satellite channel said it was coming from U.S. e-mailers apparently angry over its coverage of the Iraq war.

The Qatar-based network, which has broadcast graphic footage of dead U.S. and British soldiers, also said it would now have to delay the introduction of an English-language site for several weeks due to the barrage of spam, or junk electronic mail.

"English.aljazeera.net will not be launched until mid-April," online editor-in-chief Abdel Aziz Al-Mahmud told AFP Thursday.

The Arabic-language site has been down since Tuesday, and he said the junk mail had been pouring into the servers of the site, which is immensely popular in the Middle East.

The channel said it hoped to have the Arabic site back up soon.

The attacks began after the network broadcast footage of several U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq, some of whom had apparently been shot in the head, as well as interviews with five US prisoners of war.

Officials say the satellite channel’s viewing figures have jumped 10 percent since the war began last week.

The network has eight teams of reporters on the ground in Iraq and is the only channel to have been broadcasting from the southern city of Basra, scene of a furious battle between Iraqi and besieging US-led coalition forces.

The channel first gained major Western attention by broadcasting statements from Osama bin Laden after al-Qaeda organisation’s September 11 attacks in the United States.

The government of Qatar is a part owner of the network, which was launched in 1996, and its coverage has sometimes affected relations between Qatar and other Arab countries, notably Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Iraq War Sparks Tit-For-Tat Hacker Attacks

Pro-and-anti Iraq war protesters have been making their point by hacking into Web sites in a display of "cyber activism," rather than with the traditional can of spray paint or placard.

Countless activists -- protesters or war hawks -- have the ability to hijack or cripple Web sites from the opposing camp, leaving in their wake a graveyard of busted and defaced links.

"This is the future of protest," said Roberto Preatoni, founder of Zone-H, an Estonian firm that monitors and records hacking attacks. Since the war in Iraq started last week, the firm has recorded over 20,000 Web site defacements.

The most notable victim was al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite TV network that angered many Western viewers earlier this week when it aired footage of dead British and American soldiers and of prisoners of war.

The Arabic-language site, www.aljazeera.net, flickered to life on Friday, but access to the English-language version remained impossible, the result of repeated hack attacks since Monday.

On Thursday, visitors to the English site were greeted with a stars-and-stripes logo saying "Let Freedom Ring." Earlier, "Hacked by Patriot, Freedom Cyber Force Militia," was scrawled on the site beneath a logo containing the U.S. flag.

A spokesman for the FBI said the agency was investigating the al-Jazeera Web site hack.

Al-Jazeera was not alone. Sites on both sides of the war have been targeted, as have sites with no obvious affiliation to the war effort.

Last week, when bombs first began to drop on Baghdad, hundreds of U.S. and British business, government and municipal Web sites were defaced with anti-war messages, security experts reported. Seemingly within hours, more hawkish hackers went on the offensive against Arab sites.

Identifying themselves with such nicknames as "Hackweiser" and "DkD," hackers and hacker groups are hard to track down.

While Faisal Bodi, senior editor for aljazeera.net, pointed a finger at the Bush administration, security experts dismiss the existence of

state-sponsored hacking initiatives.

Instead they say they are usually the work of private groups or individuals with a particular viewpoint to communicate - or with the aim of gagging their opponent.

The recent tit-for-tat attacks prompted calls from free speech activists - and even some hackers - for a cease fire.

"In a protest or activist scenario, one would hope that one’s cause and message were strong enough that ’shouting down’ the opposing viewpoint is considered unnecessary," said Mark Loveless, a hacker who works for U.S. security software company BindView Corp. and is known online as "Simple Nomad."

"People wouldn’t tolerate groups that burn down book shops or news agents that sell publications they don’t agree with. They shouldn’t tolerate the online equivalent," said Ian Brown, director of the Foundation for Information Policy Research, a British free speech think tank.

But others are convinced the worst is yet to come. "If you take down al-Jazeera, everybody around the world knows it. And you never have to leave your house," Preatoni said.

Internet Body to OK Non-English Domains

Internet domain names in languages other than English should be available within the next few weeks or months, the chairman of the Internet’s key oversight body said Wednesday.

Vinc, would likely approve technical standards Thursday. The standards allow the world’s computers built around English to recognize Chinese, Arabic and other languages.

"A great deal of progress has been made this week and I hope we will see progress as the weeks go by," Cerf said. "The technical standards are ready. Now the policy work has to be done."

Cerf made his comments at a weeklong ICANN meeting that ends Friday. ICANN is the body selected by the U.S. Commerce Department in 1998 to oversee the Net’s addressing system, important for sending e-mail and finding Web sites.

The core computers that handle online addresses currently understand only the 26 English letters, 10 numerals and a hyphen, along with a period for splitting addresses into sections. Tildes, slashes and other characters are not part of the domain name and are handled by separate computers. Other languages must be converted into a string of the permitted characters.

For the past few years, a separate body, the Internet Engineering Task Force, has been working on how to convert all that smoothly, behind the scenes.

Though some non-English names have already been available on a test basis, ICANN’s approval of the new standards would make them official and help ensure that they actually work.

Even with the changes, Cerf said, the domain name’s suffix like ".com" or ".org" would remain in English for the time being.

How soon users would be able to obtain domain names in other languages depends largely on the extent to which technicians using those languages have translated their alphabets into Internet protocol, Cerf said.

"The languages that are the most advanced are Japanese, Chinese and Korean. Those groups have done a tremendous amount of work to translate their scripts into domain names," Cerf said.

Meanwhile, the incoming president and chief executive of ICANN promised to reach beyond the developed world to create a more inclusive Internet.

On Thursday, Paul Twomey of Australia will replace Stuart Lynn and become the first non-American to oversee the day-to-day operations of an organization frequently criticized for being U.S.-centric.

"We are entering a period where we need to be focused on the fact that Internet is becoming more global and we need to focus on the global aspects, particularly developing countries," Twomey said.

Dog Lovers to Decide if Bark Is Worth the Bite

If you’re wondering why your pooch howls at the moon, growls at the mailman or barks uncontrollably at squirrels, the answer may be only a click away.

A Japanese toy maker claims to have developed a gadget that translates dog barks into human language and plans to begin selling the product -- under the name Bowlingual -- in U.S. pet stores, gift shops and retail outlets this summer.

Tokyo-based Takara Co. Ltd. says about 300,000 of the dog translator devices have been sold since its launch in Japan late last year. It is forecasting far bigger sales once an English-language version comes to America in August.

The United States is home to about 67 million dogs, more than six times the number in Japan.

"We know that the Americans love their dogs so much, so we don’t think they will mind spending $120 on this product," Masahiko Kajita, a Takara marketing manager, said during an interview at a recent pet products convention in Atlanta.

Cited as one of the coolest inventions of 2002 by Time magazine, Bowlingual consists of a 3-inch long wireless microphone that attaches to a dog collar and transmits sounds to a palm-sized console that is linked to a database.

The console classifies each woof, yip or whine into six emotional categories - happiness, sadness, frustration, anger, assertion and desire - and displays common phrases, such as "You’re ticking me off," that fit the dog’s emotional state.

Takara says it has spent hundreds of millions of yen developing the device in cooperation with acoustics experts and animal behaviorists and hopes to sell 1 million units in the United States in the first eight months after

its launch.

It is undeterred by those who scoff at the idea of paying $120 to read a dog's mind. "Of course people are always really skeptical at first, but once they see a demo they are amazed and impressed," Takara spokesman Kennedy Gitchel says.

It is no secret that the product is being launched at a time of solid growth in the $30-billion U.S. pet products market, often considered to be one of the best examples of a recession-proof industry.

Sales in this niche sector have been buoyed in recent years by a steady rise in pet ownership, which has fueled demand for basic pet necessities as well as high-end items such as air-conditioned dog houses and rhinestone ferret collars.

The increasing importance of the industry was highlighted by the nation's reaction to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Many Americans found consolation in the familiar routines of their pets and were willing to pay to pamper their furry friends.

That trend continued in the months afterward as U.S. authorities tightened security across the nation and moved closer to considering a military attack on Iraq and its leader Saddam Hussein, industry insiders say.

"As fear, tension and insecurity continue to rise in the nation, people are turning to their pets for comfort," says Robert Vetere, executive vice president of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, an industry trade group. "They don't mind spending more on them."

Whether the same will hold true when Bowlingual hits the U.S. market is anybody's guess.

Sharper Image Corp. and Petsmart Inc., the No. 1 U.S. pet products company, are among the retailers that have expressed an interest in carrying the product, but so far no deals have been reached, according to Takara.

One thing that does appear certain is that the market for animal translation products will likely remain a dog's world since Takara has no plans to develop a similar device for cats.

"They are too unpredictable," Kajita said.

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